

HAFIA, the Albino

A Story of a Narrow
Escape

By Clarissa Mackie

"Now, Mr. Hanford, it is your turn to spin a yarn," remarked Professor Tregle one evening as the steamship Neptune, with a party of tourists, was skirting the African coast.

"Do, James," urged Mrs. Hanford, as the seven tourists drew their chairs into close proximity. "I know positively that you had an adventure with that albino dragoman you hired at Cairo."

"An albino dragoman?" laughed Arthur Clayton. "He gods, what a sight! Was your man Egyptian, Arabian, Musselman or Christian?"

"He was not exactly an albino; he was very fair and light haired, was he not, James?" questioned Mrs. Hanford, referring to her husband, who was listening with a smile of amusement.

"Light headed," he corrected. "Hafia had an Egyptian mother, an Arabian father. The mother was a Christian and the father a Mohammedan; Hafia was an out and out heathen and is now for all I know."

"That is not all of your story," protested Miss Emmeline Gray. "That says too much of tabloid fiction."

"It isn't much of a story," admitted Mr. Hanford reluctantly. "Indeed, I don't understand how Harriet got the idea there was a story connected with Hafia."

"I never suspected there was until I saw you kicking him down the steps of the hotel," reported Mrs. Hanford quietly, and amid the laugh that followed Mr. Hanford began his story.

"Well, Hafia, the heathen, came to me the first day we arrived in Cairo and, after assuring me that he was the most efficient interpreter and guide between the Red sea and the Atlantic ocean, he produced innumerable tattered bits of paper that he swore were recommendations from former patrons, and as I did not care to examine them I was compelled to take him at his own valuation.

"Of course, I was mainly interested in the excavations around Nana Belak and Hafia professed to have been born in the very shadow of the Nana pyramids, so I was confident that our expedition would be accomplished without mishap, as he was doubtless well acquainted with the vicinity.

"These pyramids are a half day's journey to the east of Cairo, and on the morning of our start my dragoman appeared with two camels, and soon we were leaving the city streets behind and rocking over the sandy road past the waterworks and out toward the Arabian desert.

"Master," remarked Hafia to me a few hours later as we ate luncheon beside a little spring of water, "I have been thinking that there is a pretty pyramid much nearer than that of Nana, where there are no excavations being made and where all is peace and quietness instead of dirt and disorder. One could sleep restfully there."

"Hafia," I said slowly, "we go to investigate, to observe, to discover, not to sleep. We shall sleep when we return to Cairo. Remove the luncheon and let us be on our way."

"With ill grace my albino dragoman tossed the remains of our meal into the sand and brought my camel to its knees before me. We rode on in silence for several hours. Instead of the cheerful conversation which had lightened the burden of the sandy journey, we maintained an unbroken silence, for Hafia was sulking openly, and I was out of patience with him and beginning to have serious doubts as to his integrity.

"You said it was a half day's journey," I exclaimed at last. "It is now 5 o'clock and we are still in the desert."

"I came the long way, master," growled Hafia moodily.

"Why did you do that?" I demanded, thoroughly angry.

"Hafia shrugged his shoulders. 'I have forgotten the short way. Besides, it is rough and infested with robbers.'

"How soon shall we arrive at Nana?"

"In an hour, master, but I will question this caravan."

"Approaching us across the sun bathed sand was a string of some ten or a dozen ragged looking camels, whose riders were the filthiest and most rascally looking lot I'd seen in many a day.

"Don't let them know we are alone, Hafia," I warned him. They look like robbers."

"Hafia rolled one of his queer light colored eyes toward me as he nodded reassuringly. He held a few minutes' low toned conversation with the leaders of the caravan, and then, dismissing them with a rough spoken word, he turned and watched them as they disappeared behind us through the golden sunset haze.

"When the first star has risen we shall see the pyramid of Nana, master," said Hafia good naturedly, and from that moment he chattered on with high spirits until I had almost forgotten his mores.

"Just after the sun had set and while the swift twilight was falling, blotting out distant oases or nearby sand dunes, I thought I heard the soft padding of camel boots passing us on the sand, and I strained my eyes to the west and saw as through a thick gray veil a shadowy caravan of men

and camels passing us. In an instant they were out of sight ahead of us, and I believed the vision to have been an hallucination of sight and hearing, so I did not mention the matter to Hafia, and afterward I was glad that I did not.

"All at once a dark shape loomed out of the twilight, and just above it I saw the dim luster of the first star.

"The pyramid!" I exclaimed.

"Have I spoken the truth, master?" demanded Hafia proudly.

"Yes, Hafia. Is there not a camp nearby where the expedition in charge of the excavations have their quarters? I would speak with the great man in charge. I have letters of introduction, and I would spend the night in his camp."

"There was an instant's hesitation, and then Hafia's voice came soft and velvety through the semidarkness.

"The camp of the learned men lies a half mile beyond the pyramid. It is on a high slope far above the sand dunes."

"Never mind. Ah, some of them must be here now. There is a light within the pyramid."

"Afterward I learned that the light was a small lantern carried up the outside of the edifice to guide us on the way."

"Let us get off here and see if Professor Georges is inside."

"That is a great idea of the master," assented Hafia eagerly, and he slipped from his camel and commanded mine to kneel. In another instant I was on the ground and stumbling down into an excavation, at the end of which was an oblong of light. It was the open doorway to a passage leading into the pyramid.

"As I entered the passageway I put my hands to my lips and uttered our old college yell in order to apprise Georges of my arrival. What happened afterward seems as dreamlike as the shadowy caravan I saw in the desert.

"Around a corner of the passageway a long brown arm shot out and extinguished the swinging lantern that had lured me there. Then a score of lean fingers attacked me in the darkness, and I was aware that I was being robbed of watch and money and whatever else of value I possessed. But, quick as lightning, my hand had snatched at the revolver at my hip, and I managed to free my right arm and fire it among my enemies.

"The flash and the echoing report threw the robbers into panic. The wounded one yelled terrible curses upon me unto the twentieth generation until distance silenced his voice.

"I groped my way into the open air and beneath the stars found my camel. Hafia and his beast had disappeared. I wonder if any of you ever tried to mount a camel when he was standing humped before you and you didn't know the password that would make him drop on his crouched knees. Well, I tried every way I could think of to make that camel kneel. I prayed to him, and I swore in seven languages, but he stood there in the moonlight, with sulky, protruding lower lip and obstinate poise. Once I essayed to climb up by the gorgeous trappings of leather that served as harness, but he turned and snapped at me viciously.

"I was quite in despair when suddenly out of the shadow of the pyramid there came a single word hoarsely whispered but quite audible, a word of command that brought the camel to his knees in a trice. I scrambled upon his back, turned him about as he arose to his height, and away we went over the track we had come. I trusted entirely to the camel to take me back to Cairo, and we reached there just as day was dawning. My camel chose his own way, and we entered the city by way of the citadel, and I inquired of a soldier concerning the pyramid of Nana, and I told him of my adventure of the previous night.

"He laughed and assured me that I had never been within twenty miles of Nana—that Hafia had deliberately led me to a small tomb which was a rendezvous for a gang of robbers, and he said that the shadowy caravan was without doubt the villainous band who had robbed me.

"Your guide was Hafia, the albino?" he asked skeptically.

"I nodded assent.

"Then it is a wonder that your throat was not cut," he said dryly and turned his back. I placed the matter in the hands of the police, and toward evening they returned my watch, but the money had disappeared beyond recall.

"I was preparing for bed when a servant informed me that a dragoman awaited my coming in the veranda of the hotel. I suspected it was Hafia and went down. There he was, his cloak drawn closely about his face quite disguising his features and complexion, but I caught the gleam of his pale, wicked eye.

"Master," he whined cringingly, "my camel ran away with me, and I returned too late to be of assistance to you. Shall we start again for the pyramid el Nana in the morning?"

"You may start now," I said rudely, and then it was that Mrs. Hanford saw me administer a well deserved kick to Hafia, the albino. That is the end of the story."

"Oh, James, I would have died of fright if I had known you were in such danger!" cried his wife.

"Not much danger in such a pack of cowards," reassured her husband easily.


The ladies of the party separated from the group and chatted together. The four men grew closer.

"Is that the reason you had a sudden attack of rheumatism in your left arm, Hanford?" asked Arthur Clayton.

"What was it—a knife?"

"Yes," grinned Mr. Hanford fully.

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A HUSBAND'S DUTY

He Owes It to His Family to Have
His House In Order.

PROVISION FOR THE FUTURE.

A Few Very Sensible and Very Practical Suggestions to the Man Who Doesn't Stop to Think About What May Happen When He is Gone.

There are any number of men who are the most indulgent of husbands and fathers, providing a good living for their families and who yet live up to the limit of their incomes, with never a thought for the future and never an effort to protect their loved ones and their homes in case of their death.

To such men, as well as to those who are provident, but who keep putting off the arrangement of their business affairs to meet such an emergency, the following sensible suggestions by Willis Frederick Dix in the New York Independent may be of interest:

Is your house really in order? Outwardly, perhaps, yes, since your wife is a good housekeeper, but how about your own personal affairs? Your lawyer has perhaps drawn your will for you, and your personal accounts are businesslike, but have you looked that will over recently, and in the case of your death is there some one in your household who is sufficiently familiar with your account book to understand your system?

Have you tried to imagine just what condition would exist in your family immediately after your death, and have you carefully provided for that condition? These and a number of similar questions must be answered satisfactorily before you can say that your house is really in order.

The following are a few practical suggestions which, if you think them over and act upon them, may be the means of saving you or your family from some seriously inconvenient plight or actual trouble and loss.

First of all, make a point of keeping your wife (or some member of your household) familiar with your system of personal accounts. Let her know where your safety deposit box is, where you keep the key, where your letter file relating to these business matters is kept and just what your relation to your business is. You know it is quite possible that you will die sometime.

Keep your fire insurance policies in your safety deposit box, where they will not be burned with your house, and keep in the same package with them, plans and specifications of your house, so that the fire insurance companies can know definitely just how much it would cost to replace it. With your furniture insurance policy keep a detailed inventory of your household effects, with statement of their values.

It would be impossible for you to do this from memory after the goods have been destroyed, and much needless trouble would necessarily ensue without such a list. And do not rely wholly upon your agent to renew your policies as they expire. Keep a list of the dates of expiry in your account book, where you will see them frequently.

Suppose you should be run over and killed today. Have you looked into the law of your state to ascertain whether or not your safety box would be sealed, and if it would be sealed are there any documents in it which your family would need before it were officially opened by your executors in the presence of a state officer? Your executors may take a year to settle up your estate. How about ready money for the use of your family?

When a man draws up his will it is seldom that he appreciates the fact that his cash in bank and the interest accrued on his investments up to the date of his death become principal and cannot be used by his family to pay their current expenses following his death.

An excellent way for a man to be sure that his family, upon his death, will have ready money at once, free from all complications, is to take out, in addition to his regular insurance, a policy for say \$1,000 or \$2,000 in favor of his wife or some member of his family.

This sum will have nothing to do with the legal formalities necessary in connection with the settling up of the estate and can be immediately collected and put in use.

Pistoles and Doubloons.
The pistole was much used in Spain and Italy. Originally equivalent to about eleven old French livres, until about 1730 it seems to have been merely an irregular piece of gold. In common with the moldere, the sequin and the doubloon its value varied at different times and in different countries, usually being, however, about \$3.75.

A Southern Antidote.
If Americans need an antidote for restlessness they can find it among the mountaineers of the south. It is said that when a native is asked to hurry he replies, "Don't forget there's a whole day tomorrow 'tain't been tetched yet."—Detroit Free Press.

Dutch Etiquette.
In Holland etiquette demands that an unmarried woman walk on the right of her escort, while a married woman takes her husband's left arm.

Lost time is never found again, and what we call time enough always proves little enough.

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